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ABSTRACT

This report, which maps the range of educational psychology services provided by educational psychologists in British further education (FE) colleges, examines the following topics: qualifications of educational psychologists and their role in the postschool sector; current issues for educational psychology services in FE (the legislative framework of educational psychology services, funding provision for students at FE colleges, and service level agreements and funding issues); the need for educational psychology services in FE colleges and the five levels of educational psychology services in FE colleges (work with individual students and groups of students; work with college staff, families, and caregivers; staff development; institutional systems work; and cross-organizational work); procedures in place at three FE colleges for evaluating educational psychology services; issues arising from inclusive learning (collaboration, management of teaching and learning, assessment, and funding); additional issues (local education authority-based services; participation, retention, achievement, and value added; and challenging behavior in FE); and strategies for promoting good practice. Appended are the following: descriptions of the educational psychology services available at three FE colleges; sample educational psychology service agreement; and Association of Educational Psychologists' position statement on educational psychologists in further education. The bibliography lists 12 references. (MN)

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Educational psychologists in further education

Carole Mitchell

Volume 1 Number 10

FE MATTERS

FEDA paper

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Educational psychologists in further education

Carole Mitchell

FE MATTERS

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References

1. Introduction

Some college staff are unaware of the specialist support services which educational psychologists (EPs) can offer, and some EPs working primarily or exclusively in schools are unaware of the needs within the FE sector. Yet each could benefit from knowing more about the other.

This report is therefore aimed at:

- educational psychologists
- college managers
- guidance and support staff
- student services and learning support staff
- teaching staff, especially those who work with students with learning difficulties an disabilities

Educational psychologists

Educational psychologists are experienced teachers with professional training in educational psychology. They can help with the whole range of individual learning needs, but particularly those involving learning difficulties and disabilities, and behavioural problems. Besides working with individual learners, groups of learners and teachers, EPs work in educational settings, at the strategic level, developing systems and environments to support effective teaching and learning.

Most EPs are employed in local educational authority (LEA) educational psychology services (EPSs) which concentrate on children of statutory school age and pre-school children. They provide psychological advice for statutory assessments within The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (DFE,1994)[1]. The statutory time limit of six months to conduct a statutory assessment and issue a statement places great demands on LEA and EPs, but they are also very active in preventative work and early intervention.

The report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) on *Education Psychology Services in England* (HMI, 1990)[2] concludes that EPs:

> *'through their knowledge of child development and of learning processes and from their breadth of experience, should be well placed to provide that range of initiatives and support to enhance the educational opportunities of children and young people throughout the decade'*

EPs and the post-school sector

With regard to the post-school sector the HMI report found that:

> *Most services provide only very limited support to colleges of FE, usually focusing on groups with special educational needs (SEN) and occasional referrals of students who have previously been involved with the psychology service.*

Although the post-16 sector has traditionally been beyond the remit of EP work in many LEAS, there are signs that attitudes are now changing. The incorporation of colleges in 1993, had an unsettling effect in some areas with well-established LEA provision and there is some concern that market-led forces may undermine provision for learners with disabilities and difficulties. The volatile FE climate undoubtedly presents challenges to EPs and everyone else in the sector.

Nevertheless, more enlightened LEAs have recognised that learning and individual learning needs occur not just during statutory school years but across the lifespan. They have developed their services to address the needs of lifelong learning. There is also evidence that growing numbers of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been participating in FE over the past 20 years, thus increasing the need for learning support.

The aims and uses of this report

This report maps the range of services provided by educational psychologists in FE colleges. It identifies how these services are organised and funded, breaking the work down into five levels:

- Level 1: work with individual students and groups of students
- Level 2: work with college staff, families and carers
- Level 3: staff development work
- Level 4: institutional systems work
- Level 5: cross-organisational work

Case studies from three colleges: Deeside College, Rotherham College of Arts and Technology and St Vincent College, Hampshire offer useful examples of good practice.

The appendices provide background and context. Appendix 1 contains details of the colleges, the EPs and college staff referred to in the publication. Appendix 2 provides a sample service level agreement and Appendix 3 a position statement from the Association of Educational Psychologists.

2. Current issues for EP services in FE

The legislative framework

The Education Reform Act (1988)[1] gave LEAs a legal duty to make provision on request, after the statutory school-leaving age of 16, for people with disabilities and those who experience difficulties in learning. The 1992 Further and Higher Education (FHE)Act[2] gives the Further Education Funding Councils (FEFCs) and LEAs particular responsibilities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The *Charter for Further Education* (DfE, 1993)[3] endorses the entitlement to receive educational provision.

The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (DfE,1994) refers to the need for all agencies involved in post-school provision to be included in planning for transition..

The Disabilities Discrimination Act (1995)[4] requires each college to produce a 'disability statement' giving details of facilities and services. Production of this statement will be a condition of funding from 1997. It should cover:

- policies
- admission arrangements
- educational facilities and support
- complaints procedure
- examination arrangements
- welfare and counselling arrangements
- access
- funding arrangements
- future changes (i.e.plans)

Moreover, colleges are legally obliged to ensure that, as providers of services, they do not discriminate against disabled persons. Educational psychologists can help colleges to ensure that they are meeting their legal obligations within the Act. Appendix 2 includes a sample service level agreement which indicates how this can be done.

Funding provision for students at sector colleges

Assessing the Impact (FEDA, 1996)[5] examines the impact of changes in funding arising from the 1992 FHE Act's provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. The main findings indicate that provision varies considerably in both type and extent, and the participation of adults with particular learning requirements depends very much on perceptions and interpretations of providers in the locality.

The current FEFC(E) funding methodology is set out in circular 95/07[6] Additional support units to meet the needs of individual students are calculated using the standard support assessment *pro forma*. The college is required to prepare a learning agreement specifying the additional support required by the student. The additional support units positively promote support for learners whose programmes fall within Schedule 2 of the FHE (FHE) Act and for whom the cost of additional support falls within the additional support bands. There are, however, differences in interpretation of what constitutes Schedule 2.

This funding may not always be used as effectively or efficiently as possible and EPs can help colleges to improve their use of resources. Where expensive specialised equipment is involved, for example, they can help colleges with sharing and loan schemes. They can be particularly helpful in providing professional evidence to support bids for additional support units. Although additional support needs funding is currently directed at the individual student, particular needs arise from interaction between students, staff and programmes. It is therefore important for colleges to allocate resources to the staff and programme necessary to include learners with difficulties and disabilities.

Winners and Losers (1995)[7], an Institute of Employment Studies (IES) report on funding issues for the training of people with special training needs illustrates the current difficulty of assessing funding trends, value for money and the cost of different types of special training

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provision. It suggests growing competition between the different agencies involved in publicly funded special training needs provision together with an increasing tendency for colleges to withdraw from TEC-funded provision in favour of FEFC-funded provision. The report calls on the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to create a strategy for establishing a coherent framework of provision for those with special training needs to facilitate transition, appropriate to the needs and abilities of the individual, between education, training and employment.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Circular 9/96 (July 1996) introduces a special three-year initiative to encourage high quality provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Under this initiative, FE colleges funded by the Council are eligible to apply for development project funding in collaboration with one or more higher education (HE) institutions. The initiative comes in response to the Council's new statutory duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; the need to sustain and embed the gains made in previous special initiatives; and the continuing under-representation of students with disabilities in the HE sector.

Service level agreements and funding issues

The service to an FE college from a psychological service is purchased by the college, costed and delivered by the psychological service and laid out in a service level agreement (see Appendix 2).

Key points in a service level agreement

- the services to be provided
- the amount of service to be delivered
- when the service will be delivered
- where it will be delivered
- the costs of the service and how payment will be made
- how quality will be measured and by whom
- the arrangements for resolving disputes
- the period of time the agreement stands for

Deeside College

Deeside College and Psychological Services to Industry, Education and Commerce (PSIEC) have a contract via a service level agreement which is renewable annually. Specific psychologist input is based on liaison between PSIEC and the college. The curriculum support co-ordinator makes arrangements for specific learning difficulty/dyslexia assessments; liaison for all other work is with the Head of Foundation and Support Studies Division.

Each college request specifies the nature of service required and expectations of the outcomes from that service and negotiates delivery details including time requirement, preferred psychologists, urgency, and time lines. It is important to note that the college has the final say in determining which psychologist undertakes the work. This has not generated conflict regarding professional codes of practice or other interests.

The SLA specifies costing for individual student work and, by negotiation, for consultancy, training and counselling. The costing is broadly set at a rate which translates to Grade 3 lecturer hourly pay. A costing principle is that the service is always free to the student and their families. PSIEC invoices the college when the work has been completed to the college's satisfaction and all work includes a written report of the involvement.

The FEFCW funds the psychologist's work from supplementary funding with Deeside College providing additional funding from its own budget. Funding has been made possible thanks to the demonstrable commitment of the college principal and vice-principal to equality of opportunity and to support from the principal officer (Funding section) in the Welsh FEFC. During the academic year 1995-6 the college has agreed to fund the psychological assessments from its own budget as the FEFCW were unable to fund the services of non-college specialists for this year. It should be noted that the Welsh funding arrangements are different from the English.

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

At Rotherham, since incorporation, the funding of a full-time equivalent (FTE) EP post has been managed through service level agreements which provide one FTE psychologist's time to four colleges. The charge to the college can be included in the costs of identifying and assessing need for additional support, which can be claimed by the college from the FEFC(E).

Sixty per cent (60%) of the psychologist's time is allocated to specific colleges on the basis of the number of FTE students. RCAT's allocation of is 2.5 sessions per week, (a session is a morning or afternoon), and the annual charge to RCAT for this is £6240.

The other 40% of the psychologist's time is devoted to facilitating work for the benefit of all colleges, such as:

- *facilitating Rotherham's adult basic skills advisory group*
- *supporting collaborative and externally sponsored projects*
- *some staff development work*

The annual charge to RCAT for this, about £5740, is part of a wider service agreement between the LEA and college for a range of services.

St Vincent College

In 1996, St Vincent College purchased eight days of EP time at the standard Hampshire Educational Psychology Service (HEPS) day rate. A full range of services is available by negotiation. The college pays for this from the FEFC additional support monies, which are bid for by the college for direct support work with individual students. EP involvement in the wider issues of training and development is funded through the college staff development budget and the Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) curriculum budget. This ensures that the services are free at point of delivery to the student.

The EP and LDD co-ordinator jointly submit a report to the college senior management team and HEPS with an evaluation of the current arrangements, development needs and recommendations for the next academic year.

3. Why do colleges need EP services?

The demand for FE provision from people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties has increased in recent years. At the same time perspectives about the needs and rights of these students have changed. They cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group with disability in common. It is now recognised that particular individual needs arise within the interaction between learner, tutor and programme of study. A breakdown occurs when the requirements of any one of them are beyond the other's capabilities for meeting them.

The implications for FE provision are that:

- assessments for students should be focused on their abilities and these abilities matched to relevant accredited programmes
- all students, irrespective of their level of disability, should have access to a general accredited vocational or other relevant educational programme as their main programme of study
- support should be provided for staff and students based on helping them meet the requirements of that specific programme (see above)
- placement on programmes of study should consider any barriers to access that may be caused by particular programme requirements, e.g. programmes which require good colour vision or the manipulation of heavy machinery

4. What are EP services?

EPS provide a range of services at various levels to help the sector to fulfil its responsibilities.

Level 1: Work with individual students and groups of students

Where the assessment and/or provision of help for an individual or group requires a high level of knowledge about complex factors which shape individual or group behaviour, an EP can draw on professional expertise and skills in educational psychology. Services at this level may include:

- detailed assessments of individual student needs
- specific therapy and work with individual students
- group work with students experiencing particular types of difficulty

Deeside College

At Deeside College work with individual students has grown steadily since incorporation. During the academic year 1995-6, 60 individual students will have been seen about issues including assessments of needs, reviews of programmes of provision and support, exam dispensations and counselling. Most of this work has been done at the students' homes, in the family, during evenings and weekends. This has been invaluable from a professional psychological perspective and beneficial to the college in terms of a further message of care which it conveys to the students and their families.

Most assessments focus on determining the needs of students with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) but many have been of people with general learning difficulties, Asperger's syndrome, severe learning difficulties, language disorders, challenging behaviours and emotional distress. In all cases support needs are identified and then programmes are created to meet them.

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

At RCAT specific services at this level include assessment, programming planning and advice on the needs of individuals and groups of learners and individual counselling.

St Vincent College

At St Vincent College work at this level includes special arrangements for examinations; assessment of individual students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, autism, dyslexia; and development of a support group for students with dyslexia. (Assessments are normally carried out in the college; home visits and interviews with parents are arranged when appropriate.)

Level 2: Work with college staff, families and carers

EPs tend to work most closely with staff directly concerned with learning support and their main link is usually with the learning support co-ordinator. Learning support co-ordinators often require support themselves. They need to be very flexible and adaptable and they regularly need to acquire new skills; their role is central to the process of ensuring that students are included. However, in a climate where more staff are working in learning resource centres, which are seen as a cost-effective means of providing additional support for students, there is an increasing need for EP advice from various members of staff including tutors, counsellors and support staff.

Specialist EP services at this level may include

- advice to staff on setting up appropriate support, e.g. in a workshop
- guidance and support to tutors regarding the meeting of identified learner needs
- consultancy sessions for groups of staff regarding issues of concern to them about individual students or groups of students

- advice to families and carers on appropriate use of college and community resources

Deeside College

At Deeside College all assessments involve subsequent discussion with relevant staff, including the college counsellor when appropriate. By virtue of seeing students in their homes, help has been directly offered to families. The EPs involved are known directly to many staff which enables informal discussion about many issues related to students. EPs also liaise with GPs, speech therapists, hospital departments of psychological medicine, child guidance clinics and employers.

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

At RCAT services provided at this level include professional support for college counsellors and advice and consultation with lecturers and managers.

St Vincent College

The assessment procedures at St. Vincent College normally involve consultation with college staff to develop intervention strategies, sometimes with families/carers. Inter-agency networking has also been facilitated, e.g. with schools, medical service, psychiatry, voluntary and social services. EP knowledge of the local services and access to the students' EPS files have greatly facilitated this work.

Level 3: Staff development

In the past it was assumed that people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties should be taught by experts on specially designed courses. It is now recognised that the skills required to teach a person with a learning difficulty or a disability are not fundamentally different from those required to teach anyone else. However, tutors of mainstream programmes may need additional knowledge, skills and/or support to manage specific learning needs, and make appropriate use of resources and workshop environments. Staff development can therefore be an important component of inclusive provision.

At this level EP services may include:

- training to identify learning difficulties (separating specific from general learning difficulties)
- training in working with bilingual students who also have learning difficulties
- advice and information on support strategies to help students in he classroom, e.g. dyslexic students
- assessment of staff training needs

Deeside College

Deeside College has delivered in-service training on disability awareness, specific learning difficulty, differentiation of programme materials and effective instructional strategies.

Future developments for in-service training include:

- *differentiation of instructional strategies and programme materials*
- *effective instructional strategies*
- *relevant information about disability issues*
- *helping staff prevent and resolve challenging behaviours by students*

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

RCAT has promoted and supported activities where collaboration and networking rather than competition are seen to be for the benefit of all (e.g. inter-college staff development and specific evaluative projects upon request).

There is a strong emphasis on the development of teaching and learning styles.

There is provision of, and contribution to, a range of staff development activities for increasing knowledge and skills and for facilitating cultural change.

St Vincent College

At St. Vincent College, to date, this work has mainly involved discussion of available assessment and learning materials and courses with staff but plans for joint work include:

- *whole staff development and training on dyslexia*
- *staff development on semantic and pragmatic disorders and autism*
- *support staff training on the needs of students with severe learning difficulties*
- *tutor team leaders training on supporting students with learning difficulties and disabilities*
- *departmental staff development on supporting mainstream students with learning difficulties and disabilities*

Level 4: Institutional systems work

In recent years many colleges have recognised the advantages of corporate or 'whole college' approaches which integrate curriculum development and delivery and strategic planning. A whole-college approach to learning support is crucial to meeting the needs of a wide variety of learners. It supports the move away from a concept of special needs as a separate discipline within a separate department. At this level EP work may include:

- advice and guidance on policy and practice to promote positive behaviour and address challenging behaviour
- advice and guidance regarding whole-college provision for learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties
- assistance in setting up whole-college screening and assessment procedures to identify the level of students' functioning on entry to college

Deeside College

At Deeside College EPs have contributed to the college strategy for providing support for students. This has included the cross-college system of 'Identification of Need', the modus operandi *of their specialised and specific learning support system, provision for deaf and hearing-impaired students, the visually impaired students and those experiencing severe learning difficulties.*

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

At RCAT work at this level includes:

- *consultation on approaches to managing challenging behaviour and conflict*
- *consultation on approaches to and systems for managing learning difficulties and disabilities (e.g. induction, screening)*
- *support for college-led evaluation activities*
- *systems for in-depth initial, continuing and summative assessment to assist the college and students to achieve successful outcomes and reduce 'drop out' rates through:*
  - *appropriate recruitment and accreditation of prior learning*
  - *effective monitoring of progression*
  - *development of teaching and learning styles*
  - *appropriate internal and external assessments*

St Vincent College

Future joint work with HEPS at St Vincent College includes:

- *policy development, e.g. disability statement*
- *initial assessment procedures to assist with matching student to course, e.g. disaffected school pupils with learning, social and/or behavioural difficulties*
- *support for learning to improve retention of students, e.g. adult access courses*
- *procedures to develop inclusive education further*
- *strategic planning to develop provision for students with physical disabilities and for those with autism*

Level 5: Cross-organisational work

Synchronisation of services and development of inter-agency links and networks can enhance the quality of FE provision for learners. Examples at this level include:

- managing transition from school to college and beyond
- setting up link provision between institutions
- setting up inter-agency resource banks for loan equipment

Deeside College

Deeside College has been involved in:

- *the all Wales Strategy, in conjunction with other colleges and social services, for the continued development of provision for people with severe learning difficulties*
- *other initiatives to develop provision and support for people with specific difficulties or disabilities, e.g. dyslexia and visual impairment*

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

EP services to RCAT include:

- *support for cooperative inter-college approaches to, for example, adult basic education*
- *promotion and support for externally-funded projects (e.g. European, Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), Basic Skills Agency, etc.)*

St Vincent College

At St Vincent College current work includes:

- *work on link courses and transition from school to college*
- *post-16 co-ordinators' group for LDD/learning support*
- *liaison with voluntary organisations, e.g. Hampshire Autism Society, Mencap*

5. How are EP services to FE evaluated?

EP services with their partner colleges should negotiate performance indicators and means of measureme... Like FE colleges, some psychological services have already gained or are working towards registration for quality standards.

Deeside College

At Deeside College quality criteria are based on a rigorous application of educational psychology and college codes of practice. The relevance of the EP inputs is determined by the extent to which they assist the college in ensuring that students access the most relevant courses; increasing retention rate; enhancing student performance outcomes; and increasing return rates via progression. Meeting such objectives thus increases the College's viability both in hard cash and 'value added' terms.

The operation of the support service places the focus of support equally on mainstream staff, the programme of study and the student. Students benefit by increasing their performance on the programme, from the growth of confidence which comes from a sense of being cared for and achieving better, to the extent that they are more inclined not only to stay on the course but progress further.

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

In Rotherham, during incorporation, principals asked their tutors 'Do we really want to continue paying for this service?' The answer was not only a resounding 'yes' from tutors but that they wanted more.

Subsequent evaluation was carried out at both strategic and operational levels within RCAT.

Operational staff identified as strengths:

- *the opportunity for expert consultation*
- *objective, professional assessment*
- *high quality face-to-face work*
- *staff development, e.g. specific learning difficulties, behaviour*
- *effective inter-agency liaison and coordination (e.g. ABS Advisory Group; ESOL Working Group)*
- *helpful support for individual adults*
- *practical advice and guidance*

The areas they identified for development were:

- *speedier reporting after assessment interviews*
- *more support for tutors' understanding of report implications*
- *wider access to EPs, e.g. working with teams.*

The strategic level evaluation focused on cost effectiveness and decisions to continue purchasing the service. This resulted in:

- *recognition of the good value offered*
- *acknowledgement of external funding attracted*
- *identification of curriculum development resulting from co-ordination, shared experiences and ideas across the borough*
- *the need to closely monitor and report more widely on the service in order to spread good practice*
- *the need to attempt to identify added-value from the indirect services, e.g. coordinating, chairing and liaison roles*

St Vincent College

Built into the contracted EP time at St. Vincent College are opportunities to review and evaluate current EP services. Feedback from students, staff and parents is sought and considered. Liaison with the staff development director, vice principals of curriculum, student services and personnel/finance contributes to the evaluation. Jointly, the EP and Co-ordinator LDD will submit a report to the college senior management team and HEPS with an evaluation of the current arrangements, development needs and recommendations for the next academic year.

6. Issues arising from *Inclusive learning*

The FEFC(E) Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee chaired by Professor John Tomlinson and set up to look at the best ways of meeting the FE needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, reported its findings in September 1996 in the publication *Inclusive Learning*. The enquiry was occasioned by the new responsibilities placed on both the Council and the colleges in the Further and Higher Education Act (1992). The central concept of the report is 'inclusive learning' and the focus is on how individuals can best achieve their learning goals. Many of the issues considered by the committee have implications for EP services in FE. The committee has taken an interest in and evidence on the roles of EPs in FE.

Collaboration

Inclusive learning suggests that EP help and assessment is one of a range of additional and specialist support services which may be required by some students. It finds that many colleges have service level contracts with EP services and that these benefit students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Colleges told the committee that the organisation of external support for learning had become more complex as a result of incorporation. Some said they were unable to purchase EP services because LEAs focused far more on their statutory responsibilities to provide support to schools. Others reported a decline in the scale and effectiveness of EP support. Some consortia arrangements for purchasing services were reported to have broken down. Some colleges said that they were unable to afford the new charges being made by the services.

The committee received evidence of initiatives which indicated what can be achieved when local services work collaboratively.

The committee recommends:

- regional and local co-ordination to ensure that colleges and other agencies (including EP services) are meeting all the needs in their area
- a closer collaboration between agencies with responsibilities for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- a joint departmental circular from government setting out the powers and duties of education, health and social services

The management of teaching and learning

Many of the weaknesses which the committee found in the areas of teaching, learning and management are issues which are currently being effectively addressed by the EPs participating in the FEDA project.

These weaknesses include:

- inadequate understanding within some college senior management teams of the Council's arrangements for funding additional support
- the lack of a curriculum framework for the programmes designed specifically for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the segregation of provision for students with learning difficulties from provision in the rest of the college
- ineffective deployment of learning support assistants
- insufficient leadership and support for staff

Assessment

Effective assessment of students' requirements is at the centre of the committee's thinking about inclusive learning.

The report calls for:

- more thorough assessment of each students' learning requirements during the entry phase of the current methodology
- the FEFC to consider allocating additional new funds to the entry stage of the learning programme within the tariff, to take account of the new costs of assessment which may arise for all students as a result of the committee's recommendations
- the Council to continue to recognise the costs of providing effective individual assessment and to promote a wider understanding of its funding by publishing accessible information on its funding arrangements
- colleges to understand the implications of the code of practice underpinning the Education Act 1993[10], especially in relation to the transition plan. (The committee observes that transition plans are intended to ensure some continuity of support, but it finds that some young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will not receive the same degree of support to which they were accustomed at school)

EPs, with their professional skills in assessment and their working experience of the code of practice, are well placed to assist colleges in developing effective assessment.

Funding

The Committee found that:

- external specialist support services are charging very different rates and providing services of varying quality. EP services are cited as an example
- although external support services sometimes offer poor quality and value for money, some colleges have to use them in the absence of alternatives. The assessment of students with dyslexia by EPs for exam dispensations is cited as an overpriced service by providers who are insufficiently informed about FE
- organisation and provision of support is unsystematic
- there is a general lack of good quality external support services for colleges staffed by those who have experience in and understanding of FE.

Recommended changes

Recommended changes to funding arrangements are likely to improve the potential for provision of EP services in FE. EPs can also advise colleges on how to make efficient and effective use of funding.

The report recommends that the FEFC(E) should:

- change the basis on which it allocates funds for special equipment
- allocate more funds for the assessment of student needs
- investigate the costs of purchasing external specialist support with a view to identifying standards and benchmarking costs
- establish a development fund to support colleges to deliver their action plan on inclusive learning
- develop its funding methodology over time to encourage colleges to become inclusive and support individual learners

EP evidence to the committee

EPs offered the examples of the following types of work in evidence to the committee:

- funding support and funding methodology

  EPs can advise colleges on how to make efficient and effective use of funding.

- assessment

  EPs have special skills in assessing student requirements and in ensuring effective transition from school into FE and beyond.

- assessment and provision for students with particular difficulties and disabilities

  Colleges need to ensure that they are making appropriate provision for students with semantic and pragmatic disorders, autism, Asperger's syndrome, specific learning disability, hearing and visual impairments, etc. EPs are well placed to advise on the most appropriate form of provision.

- effective ways for colleges to identify students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

  EPs can help colleges to improve some of the existing routine screening and diagnostic procedures currently in use in FE colleges. EPs can offer sound advice on the use of relevant screening and diagnostic instruments.

- college provision and management

  Many colleges have gaps in provision, especially for students with profound and complex learning difficulties, adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, students with sensory impairment, students with dyslexia or specific learning difficulties. EPs can advise on whether and how gaps provision can be filled, and how to manage teaching, learning and curriculum development.

- training/staff development

  There is a need for staff development to improve understanding of the learning needs of people with learning difficulties and disabilities. EPs can offer training in skills relevant for effective programme delivery.

Opportunities and challenges

The FEFC report heralds new opportunities and challenges for EP services to make a significant contribution to promoting lifelong learning opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It reinforces the view that EPs' work can usefully extend beyond the traditional schools sector boundaries.

The report indicates that there is room for improvement and development of EP service provision in addressing the identified issues.

7. Some further issues

LEA-based services

There is a strong case for colleges using LEA-based psychology services rather than independent or college-based psychologists. The strategic aims of colleges, LEAs and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) are interdependent. Service level agreements with LEA-based psychologists can allow the college to benefit from the established networks within the local authority. Joint LEA and college aims can be pursued. Also, the psychological service may have had significant prior involvement with students and would be able to use continuity to develop the flow of information between schools and colleges.

Participation, retention, achievement and value added

Educational psychologists can help colleges to achieve their goals by working with them to:

- develop college admissions procedures which help students to access the most appropriate course for their aptitude and ability
- improve student retention rates to reflect an increase in the number of students who complete their chosen programmes of study and do not leave college prematurely due to disaffection or failure
- improve student levels of achievement to ensure that every student achieves to their maximum capability

Challenging behaviour in FE

Colleges are expressing concern and seeking guidance on policies and practices to promote appropriate forms of behaviour in FE. These issues are relevant to all staff and students in FE, although there are particular challenges concerning disaffected young people, public areas in colleges, pupils excluded from the school system, students with responsibility for managing their own learning, etc. Educational psychologists can offer professional guidance and training based on research and practical strategies developed in the schools sector, which are readily transferable to FE.

8. In conclusion: promoting good practice

If colleges pursue a policy of contracting psychologist time purely for involvement with particular students or to contribute to specific staff development activities, they are unlikely to gain the wider benefits that a psychologist can contribute to college improvement. Such benefits occur when the psychologist works alongside tutors and regularly reviews student needs. They are unlikely to occur when psychologists provide 'one-off' reports without an in-depth knowledge and awareness of the constraints that face both staff and students in the learning context.

There are benefits for educational psychology services in gaining a clear understanding of possible progression routes and the many positive and innovative approaches to meeting educational needs in the FE sector. Knowledge of the FE sector can also directly enhance the quality of their work within the schools sector.

The relevant professional organisations need to recognise that much of the work of educational psychologists in the FE sector is with adult students. The continuing referral to work with the 0-19 age range does not accurately describe the nature of, nor encourage, the work that educational psychologists do in the FE (post-16) sector.

The current position statement on EPs in FE by the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)[12] is given in Appendix 3.

Appendix 1: Educational psychology services

Deeside College

Carol Newsam and Keith Lindley

The college

Deeside College is an FE college in the new County of Flintshire in NE Wales. Flintshire is one of the new unitary authorities emerging from the old county of Clwyd. The college enrols approximately 6000 students annually, of whom 1350 are full-time. Since incorporation it has grown by 40% and further significant growth is expected.

Deeside's chief strengths are in vocational training. It offers over 900 courses across GCSE, A level, GNVQ, NVQ , extensive Access to HE provision and bespoke courses to industry. It has very strong management and staff commitment to providing for students with difficulties and disabilities of all kinds. The College policy specifies principles of inclusion rather than integration as the cornerstone of its provision.

This support for all students has been developed since 1991 in line with the key principles that 'special educational needs' are not features exclusively about students but rather a statement of a relationship between the learner, the programme of study and the programme deliverer. Thus the support is 'tripartite' in that it is aimed at all three elements within a situation of educational difficulty rather than the 'special educational need' of the student. 'Assessment' therefore is a process of identification of need in each part of this situation rather than solely assessment of the needs of the student.

Carol Newsam: Curriculum Support tutor/Co-ordinator for Specific Learning Difficulties

Carole Newsam began working at Deeside College in 1991 and is now the Curriculum Support Tutor/Co-ordinator for Specific Learning Difficulties. In the last few years Carol has undertaken extensive additional training in relation to the provision of curriculum support and support for specific learning difficulties. Carol is an Associate Member of the British Dyslexia Association and an Irlen Diagnostician. Irlen assessments involve the identification of Irlen Syndrome difficulties and the provision of overlays or Irlen tinted lenses to reduce the effects of these difficulties. Many students who are dyslexic also have Irlen Syndrome difficulties.

Carol works within the Division of Foundation and Support Studies. The work of this division includes the provision of discrete courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, pre-vocational 'taster' courses, a communications workshop and cross-college curriculum support service that supports educational difficulties arising from mainstream students' general or specific learning difficulties. The Curriculum Support Team for Specific Learning Difficulties supports over 100 mainstream students across the College. This team comprises of one full-time Tutor/Co-ordinator and four part-time members of staff employed for a total of 54 hours per week.

A major part of her work now involves co-ordinating informal and formal assessments of students' difficulties with learning. Other aspects include the operation of an Irlen Centre within the College, the provision of individual tutorial support sessions for students, the loan of equipment and support materials to students and the provision of examination allowances. There is extensive cross-college liaison with both academic and support staff including admissions staff. Curriculum support staff are also involved in informal and formal in-service training initiatives.

Keith Lindley: Senior Educational Psychologist

Keith Lindley is a member of a group of Chartered Psychologists based in Cheshire operating under the title of Psychological Services to Industry, Education and Commerce (PSIEC). As part of their work they provide a service to FE colleges.

Keith is a Chartered Educational Psychologist, having entered the profession in 1971 and has worked in Liverpool, Leeds and Clwyd LEAs in their pre-16 educational services. He also has many years' experience of offering educational psychology services to adults in various educational, training and commercial settings. His specific experience of the FE setting derives from his work in Clwyd, carrying the LEA's responsibility for special educational needs (SEN) provision in the five Clwyd FE colleges prior to incorporation. This was a full-time post, later supplemented by a second full-time EP. He was a member of the Welsh Office Advisory Group considering special educational needs issues in FE leading up to incorporation. After incorporation, it was unfortunately not possible for the LEA to continue with this service from Clwyd's County Psychological Service, either directly or under terms of 'trading at the margins'. Hence a group of the LEA EPS, committed to maintaining the service, did so, but in their own time, co-ordinated by PSIEC.

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

John Coleman and Jan Eldred

The college and the psychology services

Within Rotherham there is one sixth-form College and three FE colleges, the largest being Rotherham College of Arts and Technology (RCAT), based in the centre of town. The Psychology Service has eleven psychologists to provide a service to the community which has a school population of approximately 41,000. Since 1986 half of a psychologist's time was allocated to providing a service to the three FE colleges and the LEA's youth training managing agent. Following incorporation it was agreed that the allocation of time to the Colleges needed to be increased to one full-time psychologist.

Background to developments

In 1986 tutors at RCAT were only too aware that many support services that were available to staff and pupils in a school were not easily accessible to staff and students in college. Informally, tutors sought advice from the psychologist on particular individual needs that were challenging them. The advice given was of practical help and had implications beyond the needs of the individuals. As a result, managers and tutors asked the psychologist to look at provision within its Department of Social and Community Education. The brief included looking at a wide range of discrete courses and cross-college issues and providing advice on the quality of provision and development needs.

Once again the practical value of the psychologist's advice, given as a 'critical friend', for both managers and tutors led to requests for more formal arrangements for access to the Service. The LEA agreed to allocate half of one psychologist's time to support the three FE colleges.

Current range of services

Nearly ten years later, although many developments have taken place, the essential nature of the Service to the college remains the same: to provide practical advice and support to tutors, students and managers. Colleges are offered a package of services to help them develop further the quality and effectiveness of both teaching and learning for all students, both with particular regard to students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

John Coleman is the Principal Educational Psychologist in Sheffield. Until recently he worked as a senior educational psychologist in Rotherham where, since 1986, he has provided a psychological service for the staff and students

of the local colleges. He has experience of all sectors of the education service from pre-school through to HE both in a teaching capacity and as a psychologist.

Jan Eldred is now Head of School for Basic and Community Education, Foundation Programme and Learning Support. At the time of this work she was the Programme Area Leader for Basic Skills and Community Education at Rotherham College of Arts and Technology, having worked for 20 years in the post-compulsory sector especially in the areas of Adult Basic Skills and Adult Returner Work.

St Vincent College

Joyce Harrison and Christina Currie

The college

St. Vincent was formed as a sixth-form college in 1987 as part of the local re-organisation of schools. It began with approximately 200 students and co-existed with St. Vincent school for several years. St. Vincent College now has approximately 1100 full-time students and an adult part-time programme involving a further 700 students.

Excellent working links existed with all the LEA special needs advisory teams prior to incorporation. Following incorporation some of these services were no longer accessible. However, since autumn 1994 the college has re-established links with Hampshire Educational Psychology Service (HEPS) by buying in the required time.

Joyce Harrison, Educational Psychologist

Joyce has been an EP in Hampshire since 1983. She has a background of teaching in schools and adult education. She worked with sixth-form and FE colleges developing Hampshire County policy and provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities before incorporation. Since then she has maintained links within FE advocating access to educational psychology Services. She is also involved in the training of EPS. From autumn 1994 her services have been bought in by St. Vincent College. She continues to work with some of the mainstream and special schools that feed into the College.

Christina Currie

Having taught English in Scotland, England and Spain, Christina began working full-time in the learning difficulties/disabilities (LDD) field in post-16 education in 1988. She has had overall responsibility for LDD students in St. Vincent College since 1993. She is working towards developing the provision for students with a wide range of additional support needs so that they may access courses through the college.

Appendix 2: a sample educational psychology service agreement

Introduction

From 1st April 19 A service will continue to be provided by the Educational Psychology Service to 'A' College under the European Service Agreement made between 'B' Borough Council and 'A' College (the 'European Service Agreement').

The services described below under this agreement will be in addition to the services under the European Service Agreement. The provision of Educational Psychology services under this agreement shall be known as 'the Service Agreement'.

Description of service

Colleges are offered a package that includes a range of services to help them to develop further the quality and effectiveness of both teaching and learning for all students, but with particular regard to students with learning difficulties or disabilities. This range of services includes:

- direct intervention with individuals and groups of learners
- advice and consultation with lecturers and managers upon request
- provision of staff development activities upon request
- promotion and support of externally funded activities (e.g. Adult Learning & Basic Skills Unit, (ALBSU); Training & Enterprise Council (TEC))
- specific evaluative projects upon request

Specific services available include:

- assessment, programme planning and advice on the needs of individuals and groups of learners
- in depth initial, continuing and summative assessment to assist colleges and individuals to achieve successful outcomes through:
  —appropriate recruitment and accreditation of prior learning
  —development of teaching and learning styles
  —appropriate internal and external assessments
- reports to
  —support college requests for appropriate resources from the Further Education Funding Council to meet the needs of individual students
  —support requests for exam dispensations.
- individual counselling
- consultation on approaches to managing learning difficulties and disabilities
- professional support for college counsellors
- provision of, and contributions to, a range of in-service activities
- consultation on approaches to managing behaviour/conflict
- support for co-operative approaches to Adult Basic Education
- promotion and support for externally funded projects (e.g. ALBSU, TEC, etc.)
- support for college-led evaluation activities

Time allocation

1. 20% devoted to facilitating collaborative aspects across colleges. i.e. issue or project-based work involving all college.

   For example:

   - facilitation of adult basic skills advisory group, adult learners development group
   - support for TEC-sponsored projects
   - some in-service work

2. 20% to general administrative duties, service staff meetings, professional development, etc.

3. Allocation of 'A' college inclusive of time allocation under the European Service Agreement will be 'X' sessions per week.

Length of agreement

The length of this agreement will be three years with an annual option to renew, beginning on the 1st of April, 19 .

Charges for the service

The charge for the Service Agreement with be £X.00 per annum, exclusive of VAT, payable quarterly by the College within one month of being invoiced.

Performance criteria

Quality of the service will be judged by the satisfaction of the Principal and Governors of the College. Any concerns about the service should be addressed to the Principal Educational Psychologist who will investigate the matter and respond to the College in an appropriate manner.

Termination

The Service Agreement may be terminated by either party giving three months' notice in writing to the other party. If the Service Agreement is terminated by the College under this clause, the College shall pay to the Council all arrears due under the Service Agreement at the date of termination.

This agreement signed on (date).....

For (name of college) ..... Signature.....

For 'B' LEA ..... Director of Education

Appendix 3: Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) — Position statement on educational psychologists in FE

As the national professional association representing educational psychologists (EPs), the AEP strongly supports the view that all students should have access to the services of a fully qualified EP, free at the point of delivery, notwithstanding college funding problems.

The unique role of the EP in assessing and providing advice for children with special educational needs up to the age of 16, is dictated by statute and the wider role in offering a service to all children is protected by the strong recommendation from the DfEE that funding for educational psychology services (EPSs) should be retained by the LEA.

Part of an EP's statutory duty is to contribute to a 'statemented' student's 14+ 'Transition Plan', which outlines the final two years of the student's schooling and the move into FE if that proves to be appropriate.

Legislation making colleges financially independent has affected their previous free access to an LEA's educational psychology services, but other legislation (FHE Act, 1992) makes it clear that colleges should meet the special educational needs of students. There is an element in their budget that they can claim to allow for this. The *Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs* (1994) encourages links between schools and colleges and recommends that colleges should receive copies of the student's most recent annual review and the transition plan.

The AEP is aware that more students with special educational needs are staying on in colleges, but that the drop-out rate among such students is worryingly high — representing a waste of their opportunity and valuable college resources.

The range of services that an EPS could offer a college might include:-

- individual work with students: assessment, counselling and special examination arrangements.(Some of the students may have been well known to the EP during their school career.)
- development work with college staff on curriculum content and teaching method
- networking with other agencies: Social Services, DHA, careers service and parents
- advising on college special needs issues. Record keeping, monitoring, liaison, management of special needs or learning support departments

Our experience is that colleges have valued and welcomed the service offered by EPS and would like more if funding problems can be overcome. Some LEAs have had EPS working specifically in FE and others are presently drawing up service level agreements with colleges to continue this arrangement.

The Association of Educational Psychologists can be contacted on 0191 384 9512.

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